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ABSTRACT

Contradictions in belief and ambiguities rooted in culture cause confusion without many being aware of its sources. The resulting strain is unevenly distributed. The problems women face are complex and have roots in the conflicting views of women's worth, woman's place as well as the time overloads of role demands and the conflict in the priority system. The maintenance of ambivalence, of cross-pressures, the double binding of women, the manipulation of rewards and punishments all create a system of social control which has served to undermine women's equal participation in society. Women are not only not rewarded but also not punished in their professional lives the same way that men are. It is only by keeping alert to the hidden agendas and to the sabotage in both macro- and micro-interactions that women can do their job of work without having to figure their way out of mazes. (EN)

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Ambiguity as Social Control

The Salience of Sex-Status in Professional Settings

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For some years sociologists have been discovering and rediscovering a set of phenomena which deals with the awkwardness created for people from contradictions in cultural beliefs. Robert Lynd, three decades ago, in a book called Knowledge for What? showed how Americans wrestled for closure in a value system with such contradictory themes as "Everyone should be judged on individual merit," yet "we should treat all people equally"; or, "experience is the best teacher," yet education is the most important resource a person can have, and "Women are the finest of God's creatures: but women are inferior to men in reasoning power and general ability."

Lynd alerted us to the ambiguities rooted in culture which caused confusion without many even being aware of its sources. Ambiguity and inconsistency, however, and its resulting strain, is unevenly distributed. As sociologists have pointed out, mechanisms for coping with strain are also more easily available to some people than to others. People from some groups are the beneficiaries of almost a social largesse in that they are helped to manage their lives because society helps them. Thus, experienced at the personal level, there are coping strategies for some, and paralysis for others. White men of the middle class, for example, pressured to work hard at a career, yet urged to spend time with family, have typically been given clear priorities about what should come first, and others in their network don't give them too hard a time about it. But pity the poor woman physician, manager, university professor or

lawyer, on the other hand, who is damned by her colleagues at work if she takes out time for family responsibilities (even though they think a good woman should!), and damned by her family, if she focuses on work.

This may sound "old hat" by now but it is worth looking at analytically because the problems women face are complex, and have roots in the conflicting views of woman's worth, woman's place, as well as in the time overloads of role demands and the conflict in the priority system.

Women's rights to make their own choices, trust in their commitments and competence may well come from men's intensive investment in the maintenance of their own dominance. Keeping women insecure, and guessing about how to do the morally "right" things, and be the morally right people, have been effective in maintaining that dominance.

Is it mere happenstance that in so many societies there are characterizations of women that mark them as threatening and evil, yet at the same time women are loved and respected.

Damned with praise and praised while damned, women as a class have been defined as sacred and profane, by the same people, in the same society. They themselves accept these judgments as proper.

I am fascinated and appalled by the mythologies and religions, and also the so-called scientific theories and experiments which underscore and create rationales for the respect-disdain modalities which seem to be embedded in so many societies with regard to women. Even in ours. The smartest, the greatest.

Not too long ago, in an article which assessed ten years impact of the woman's movement I considered the fact that women, forever intimate

and integrated with men had to face contradictory assessment of their quality as human beings. Good enough to live with, eat with, merge with in acts of intimacy, women were considered odious to work with.

Why do women have a better opinion of men? Or have they kept quiet about what they really think? What is the function of the special ambivalences that mark the relationship of women to men -- the components of attraction and withdrawal, love and hate, need and distaste.

There have been philosophic and psychoanalytic analysis galore which attempt to understand this. Current feminist writing has also explored the causes for it.

I shall fill in more of my own theory. Then on to the cases.

I reject most genetic, physiological and psychoanalytic explanations. I suggest ambivalence directed toward women, and played out in behavior, is a systematic attempt of people in charge, those who initiate and maintain systems of hierarchy, to keep women subordinate. This happens at home and in the other institutions of society. The maintenance of ambiguity, the maintenance of cross-pressures, the double binding of women, the manipulation of rewards and punishments -- all create a system of social control which has served to undermine women's equal participation in society. It doesn't only happen early, at puberty. It happens all the time. It is integrated into the processes of social interaction. As a result of this on-going social control system, women have been manipulated to perform only at the level of functioning necessary to the operation of the status quo without pressing beyond the boundaries.

Of course the scenario is changing. Women have moved individually and

collectively to do something about their situation. They have sought redefinition of who they are and what they are worth in both private relationships and in public ones. Curtailing fertility, engaging in market activity, engaging in political activity, those who made the rules before have been persuaded to change them. But informal processes die more lingering deaths than formal rules, that is, if they die at all.

I shall consider some kinds of problems women face as professional workers, against the backdrop of change over the past decade.

Why professional women? Because one would think they are the best equipped, most resourced group, and most alert to the problems of being undermined. In some sense what they face is more insidious than the problems of working class women, because they are often not obvious. For example, I was recently told by a lawyer for the Equal Rights Advocates firm in San Francisco that they are fighting a case for a woman truck driver who is being harassed. Forced to take her in because of sex discrimination legislation, the woman is assigned the worst truck in the fleet, one with mechanical problems, and assigned the most unpleasant hours to use it. Recently she entered the cab of her truck and fell from her seat to the ground below because someone had slicked the seat with oil. That is not a subtle message.

But no one smears grease on the desk chair of the woman attorney, and the conspirators in the undermining of her professional role are scattered about her environment. Friends, relatives, colleagues, judges and even her client may be in on the action to make her feel less-a-lawyer than she ought, and she may even be persuaded to aid in her own

exclusion.

How does this work?

Let me start by discussing the ambiguities women lawyers face.

My first study of women in the legal profession was begun in 1965. I interviewed women lawyers, representatives of a tiny minority. How did they perceive themselves? among other things. I was struck with their view of discrimination. Many didn't notice it. Many believed in the system. They believed that good work payed off in high rewards and that if one failed it was one's own fault. Subscription to the American dream.

I found these women did disproportionately well in law school. So they should have done well later finding good jobs and advancing in them. Of course, I only interviewed those who did find work and some of them did fine. But it was hard to know if they were doing fine compared to their peers or "fine for a woman," or fine according to their own set of aspirations and personal goals. Many, however, were blocked at crucial points along the way. Was it their fault?

Today there are social scientists who seem to believe that aspiration is a trait clustered on the Y chromosome, or created between the ages of zero and four years old on the playing fields of the elementary schools.

In any event, by merely becoming lawyers these women were already doing something rather aspirational in those days. It seemed clear that for these gutsy women, whether they aspired high or low had a lot to do with a realistic assessment of whether they had a chance to do better and cut their losses. Not hormones. Opportunity structure! In the past,

when we asked middle class boys if they would like to be President of the United States and they said "yes" we called them high achievers. If we asked girls if they would like to be President, and they said yes, we suspected they were strange or feared they would become castrating females. Aspiration is a concept tied to some realistic order of probabilities.

Yet scientists and lay people have condemned women for being under-achievers, "fearers of success" or underendowed with the chemical substances necessary to create ambition, while at the same time they have been locked into structures where only a bad gambler might not fear to tread. Women lawyers in Wall Street firms in the old days knew you had to work nights and weekends to enter into the competition for partner, but they were told early that they couldn't become partners. As a result few put in those kinds of hours. Male partners reported that women didn't work hard enough.

What about the men? Some worked hard to make partner and of those some made it and some didn't. Some didn't try. Of those who didn't try, no one suggested we analyze their hormones. Of course some who didn't try were Jews and Catholics (I am not sure they let a black man inside the doors at all) who also knew they wouldn't make it. There was no secret about the matter. Nothing mysterious. They took their training and went to another firm; or formed their own.

Men who didn't try, or who did try and couldn't make it, inevitably found some kind of career in law, or in business, or perhaps in government. Of course, this also happened to the women. But for the men there was a structure outside creating pressures on them to find work elsewhere

and supporting their efforts while for the women there were people outside urging them to drop out. Those nearest and dearest: parents, husbands and kids. Women were encouraged to fail if they ventured into men's domains. They were rewarded for failing while men were encouraged to succeed and when they did succeed, met unambiguous praise for it.

What is it about mobility, success, prestige and power that some get to have it and others don't? When we are dreaming the American dream and believing the American ideal, we learn that the worthy and the hearty, the enterprising and the adventurous, are the ones who get it, -- with a little help from their friends, and, -- the right connections.

Yet women with the right connections, hearty, enterprising, and worthy didn't used to be able to get their friends to help.

Some time ago (in a paper I wrote which never got the attention it deserved), I reported on the social control system in the legal profession where it was suggested that women, like other unwanted categories of people, were not only not rewarded but not punished in their professional lives in the same way men are. I suggested that positive and negative sanctions in community and family as well as in the occupation itself, were necessary to educate and provide feedback necessary to move a person along a status sequence from recruit to professional. Rewarded for doing well, but shown where one was doing badly; treated with respect in anticipation of the role which was to be acquired, the recruit would learn about how to think and act like a professional.

We found that women didn't get this treatment, They were subjected to an ambiguous and misleading set of social controls and socialization

experiences, on the job and in the community. They were faced with systematic contradictions.

Not only were many women not rewarded for doing well by not getting raises and promotions, but many women were not punished for failing (that is, dropping out of legal careers or doing poorly). Rather, paradoxically, they might be rewarded for failing in the profession, (e.g. being kept in a firm as an associate far beyond the time a man would have either been promoted or asked to leave, or in the community, becoming President of a local PTA when they had left their profession). They might also be punished for succeeding (by being subjected to accusations of being unfeminine, neglecting their children, actually losing male friends and husbands or simply being ignored when promotion time came).

Ambiguity keeps women "in their place." For example, women workers who are not in situations where there are rules regarding advancement procedure, are often inappropriately rewarded -- (secretaries get gifts of flowers or candy when their work is good, not in addition to, but instead of getting salary increases or movement upward in the job hierarchy). Wives who do research for their husbands get kisses and fur coats and not co-authorship. Thus their rewards are often attached to a status not salient to the situation or context.

Consequences for motivation, self-esteem and labeling flow from these contradictory messages. We found that women lawyers in practice with their husbands, for example, tended to define their professional activity as attached to their family role (they were "helping their husbands") because they felt guilty about working. The women felt they didn't need to work.

Men always feel they need to work. Women don't feel they need more money. Even at $85,000 a year men need more money. Everyone agrees.

This set of observations and analyses led me to see if things had changed both within the professional context and in coordination with their family lives in my current follow-up study of women in professional life. In recent interviews we asked women lawyers about their goals, ambitions and perplexities. We also asked men in their lives about how they evaluated women's ambitions and their chances for advancement within the firms.

We found that today, as always, women face ambiguous situations where it was difficult to locate themselves professionally. But they were more apt to calculate, in a cost-benefit manner, how they were doing. Women probably differ from most men in the way they make "plus-minus" calculations about success. For example, men figure out how well they are doing their job and whether they will get a raise. They are not wondering if their family will like the idea. Women, however, tend [more so] to calculate cost-benefit variables across systems. When they are calculating whether they will get a promotion, they are also asking whether their husband will mind, will it ruin the children.

It is this phenomenon that Matina Horner was tapping when she found that high achieving women tested in college were often suffering from "fear of success." It is clear now that what she found was fear of the costs to their personal lives which success in occupation would entail.

In our first lawyer study we found that when women were fearful that there would be consequences at home of success, they used various mechanisms to downplay their achievements -- even turning down raises or avoiding

career lines which might press their careers beyond their husbands. Not all women attorneys did feel fearful however. Some were protected. Some had husbands so much more successful they could never compete in the discriminatory world in which they found themselves. Curiously by their special disadvantages, black women were, normally, free of this impediment.

Society made the cost of choosing a career in a male-dominated sphere high before the 1970's. One had to be stronger, more resourceful, and generally more advantaged to enter these occupations. Yet cultural messages in contradiction to the facts suggested that women lawyers were poor risks and worth little investment either in training or development of careers. They were only permitted to practice in low prestige, low paying and low responsibility specialties. In that manner, they could practice law at low risk to the professional community because they were not dealing in the really important realms of high finance and policy.

Messages to women were to hold back, to moderate their commitment to career and not to aim for the rewards of occupational activity appropriate for men like money and power.

These threats had the backing of moral sanction. Women were told by fellow male classmates that they were taking a place of a man who needed training for a career to be able to support a family. Interviewers for jobs asked them how they would avoid neglecting husband and family. At each level, should women not be convinced of the injustice or inappropriateness of their striving, structural barriers were put in their way to raise the price of involvement.

What did this do to the lawyers? They were caught in a bind.

They were intent on "proving" themselves, on being "better than a man." However, this was not in the service of ambition, but mainly directed at being acceptable and staying at neutral. We found that women attorneys typically did not state that they wanted goals of prestige, money and power. They reported they wanted to accomplish tasks, help people, make enough money to support themselves, help the family or provide needed services.

We think they were untruthful to themselves and to us. They were saying what the acceptable thing was to say. I have reviewed studies which have analyzed the motives for women choosing law as a career. These show that women, like men, vary in their motives. And wanting to "do good" did not preclude wanting to achieve. Some only wanted to win. Yet even when they are ambitious, women are often ambivalent about how "just" it is for them to have aspirations.

As I said, the subject of success and ambition was always a touchy one in the interviews we conducted 12 years ago. Success is very much linked with notions of the ideal woman, the ideal family, and the ideal society. Just being in a male-dominated profession suggested that the women involved were aiming higher than they should and they didn't get much sympathy for being overloaded. If beyond that, the women wanted notice and money, others were appalled.

The physical and time pressure overload problems of working and maintaining private lives are the same for women no matter what kind of work they do. But for those who work in male domains, there are the additional mental burdens which come from their own and their family's feelings that perhaps they should not be there in the first place.

A woman named Cynthia Kukor lost an election for Congress because her husband made a public statement saying he wanted her at home.

Friends, family and neighbors always show a sympathy and community of spirit for the woman taxed by the care of sick child or parent. That doesn't threaten anyone and is known to be temporary. But women who work at a job that is conceived of as man's work do not get much sympathy, and that is even true of women working hard as teachers or nurses. It cuts into other people's time who are not brought up to believe that it is proper. If the work carries the possibility of high rewards there is even further ambivalence for the woman herself as well as the people in her life for there is always the feeling that she is biting off more than she can chew, and out of greed or selfishness, she is aiming higher than her position in life ought to permit.

Of course, there is public ambivalence to all people who wish to achieve and whose behavior is far from the mode. Crowds have long thrilled to see gladiators tear each other apart, racing car drivers crash, and bull fighters gored. Part of the excitement of the adventuresome act is the possibility of defeat. Risk takers excite but also create unease. For winners there are high rewards. But because they are so high, arbiters of social convention are typically uncomfortable if someone achieves a high honor who is not considered honorable to start with, or appropriate to the particular reward which will be bestowed. Therefore there are controls on who may take the risk.

One way people with high achievement needs cope, who are cut off from taking risks, is to procure honor by association. Women, prevented from highly rewarded risk taking, have engaged in this pattern by associating

with high achievement men. Men have found this not only pleasant, but useful in managing their complex lives. Women have therefore been conditioned and rewarded for playing a supporting role in the lives of male achievers. As helpmates and companions, it was only through the achievements of others they could measure their own contributions to society.

Now that women have a little more permission to take risks and become achievers, they find there is still a residue of unease about the role they are taking, and that further, they cannot depend on the same support network that male achievers learned to expect. Not that men in their lives -- personal and professional -- do not always wish to give them support or encourage their ambitions. Sometimes they can't. The men are not used to assuming supporting roles. They think such roles diminish them, or curtail their own ambitions. And, they don't know how to perform them well.

For example, there exist a variety of behaviors ranging from tactful retreat to active help at which women have come to be experts. The need for these sorts of behavior by women and the inexperience of men in providing the right kind at the right time, can cause resentment and strain on both sides. Perhaps one reason men are confused by women's expectations as compared with the expectations of their male friends and co-workers, is that women know what they provide for men, and want some of the same. Men's style is different; they need and expect less from male companions, partly because what they need is provided by women, who sometimes know what they need better than they do.

If men who are close to women achievers say nothing supportive through

ignorance or hostility they are doing something negative. Similarly, if they don't take on some role burdens she carries. Of course some don't even wish to support and if they question, undercut, undermine and challenge, the psychological burden may be too great to bear. Something has to go. For some women it is the husband, through divorce or separation. But what I am talking about here is not just the cutting off of relationships and the tasks which accompany them which create time burdens and pressures (such as the physical needs of the family -- shoppint and cooking, cleaning, chauffeuring, making appointments for medical and dental care -- but the psychological burden of disapproval or indifference) dragging down her aspirations and energies. Most often the "something that has to go" is the big plunge forward, the large sights, the goals of immodest reward. Thus even if women work in an inappropriate domain, they can at least make it manageable for their family and friends to cope with if they don't work too hard at it. They are more acceptable if they work part time, they make little money, they help poor folk whom no one else wants to help, or save the injured, the lame and the socially misfit. Let me share with you a case of contemporary ambivalence.

> One lawyer talked about starting on a job in a high pressure firm and wanting to put her <u>all</u> into it. Everyone else who had come in stayed late and came in on weekends and she felt pressured and pulled to go home and make dinner at night. She says she felt guilty about not wanting to go home. After a while she hated being married. She sorted out that problem by talking about it to her husband who had started two years before, so

> he understood the dilemma. Yet for the future she speculated she would have to go into a less pressured job because she knew she would feel guilty about going home to kids. Yet she loved her work.

Here the couple could identify with each other and had similar experiences. Other young women lawyers complain that although a boyfriend or lover might be sympathetic when she had a lot of work to do in a crisis, most men got fed up with consistent late hours. Hundreds, thousands, of women have borne with doctor and lawyer and managerial husbands because they figured --

1) there was nothing they could do about it and 2) they had some investment in the high intensity commitment of the man. The men often do not feel the same investment in the women. Although now, for the first time, a few do. Some young lawyer husbands whose wives were making $25-$40,000 a year knew they could live at a higher standard of living than if they were secretaries or teachers or didn't work at all. They tended to be more flexible, and less threatened than husbands in another field.

Some women today find they have to de-escalate their ambitions because other women find that behavior ideologically incorrect.

Most radical feminists as well as moderates of all persuasions oppose the assumption of what they called "male" values by women. Ideological lines were drawn in the early 1970's which continue, between the women who felt it legitimate and appropriate to work

primarily for high status and money, and those who believed it morally wrong, and ideologically incorrect. This later group was different from the timers who believed it was "unfeminine" for women to seek success in "male" terms. They believed that women had been prevented from achieving success before, and this had had the benefit of removing them from the corruption of the "rat race." They argued that for women to move in the direction of internalizing "establishment" values would be to capitalize on the opportunity presented by an illegitimate opportunity structure.

Let me move from general cultural themes to the interactional situation and what I have called microinteractional social controls which go on today in undermining women's integration in professional life and also locate where change is evident.

Interaction with Men

Many women have problems in striking a proper balance between pleasant social relations with their male attorney and client colleagues and maintaining professional distance. Especially for those attorneys practicing in lower level courts and out of elite practices where a more courtly etiquette prevails, being businesslike is difficult, and determining what is businesslike is sometimes impossible.

Attorneys complain that their male counterparts call them "honey" or "sweetheart" as they might their girl friend or, for that matter, the watress at the corner diner. One attorney said that it is common practice for a male to address her by her first name "Jane," and introduce himself as "Mr. Smith." When she reacts and suggests that is improper he considers

her a prig, humorless or just bristles at the object lesson.

Men complain that the women don't understand them, that if they put an arm around a woman attorney, it is no different than putting an arm around a male attorney. But, the women say it's different. Women are often placed in a "Catch 22" situation. Men "come on to them" by alluding to their femaleness, either sexually or as a little girl. When they object to being cast in one of those roles, or if they rebuff the man's attentions when they are offered in a sexual or fatherly manner, the men decide they are stiff, humorless or inflexible. If they respond positively, even modestly, some men decide they are sex objects or little girls and therefore unprofessional. One of the lawyers we interviewed said that even clients who were confident in her abilities felt uneasy about how others would react to their choice. She tells the story of riding in an elevator with a client who met a friend. He greeted the friend and presented her to him with this comment: "Look what's my lawyer!"

Would he have felt serene if she said, "look what's my client?" He wouldn't have known what she was talking about. Of course the woman did. Should she have told him off? That would have been viewed as an insult. She needed his business. And, after all, he didn't mean it badly. Double binding.

Humor cannot be used by all. Not everyone knows how to use it. When used effectively it must be handled subtly. Humor may often be viewed hostilely and the man may feel even worse having been bested by humor which implies the woman was shrewder and more clever than he. Yet, as a coping mechanism among equals, humor, even vicious humor, may be the

only recourse. Men can hurt and men can also help, and do. It is the interaction with male colleagues that women can be made to feel secure as a professional or insecure.

We discovered there is behavior which ranges from "look what's my lawyer!" to this kind of support.

A woman lawyer reported sitting with colleagues in her firm and clients who always use salty language. Every time they say something like "shit" or "damn" they say, "Excuse me, Lee." This goes on and on. At some point they discuss sending papers to their opponent to start a suit. The client, "all right, send the f..king subpoenas, excuse me Lee." Her male colleague retorts, "She has heard of subpoena before."

Another incident:

A young woman lawyer with a big Wall Street firm found out that the client she was sent to complained to the firm about sending them a female attorney. She learns the senior partner refused to send a male instead and tells the client his firm hires only the best; she is among the best, and if they have confidence in her so should the client. The client submits.

Could the women attorneys help themselves? Sometimes they can and sometimes not. It works better if the woman attorney is legitimated by a higher status person. Who is that? Usually a man. Better if he also has high rank in the organization.

Of course structure helps too. Power helps. When women hold higher posts; when the women are married; when they are older; and when a colleaguial

relationship has endured for some time, the salience of sex status retreats.

Some types of legal practices, however, are structured so that the lawyers on one side are younger than opponents or superordinates, or they deal with a turnover of role partners. Some kinds of legal services and criminal practices are of this nature.

But there is also routinization of the Catch 22 or "Damned if you do; Damned if you don't syndrome. In current interviews there is a clear indictment of women attorneys that they are stiff, and inflexible. The quality of "stiffness" is reported often by male attorneys when they are asked about women lawyers but also was commented to me by older women attorneys. This is true at all strata of the bar. It is also the evaluation of women in other professions especially when they are on unfamiliar turf.

I suspect <u>some</u> women are stiff and that the stiffness is structurally induced. Used to being dismissed as unserious or uncommitted, women feel they ought to show a professional mien. Some may in fact, overproduce "professionalism" in this context. Some are not being stiff, merely straight. That is they will not engage in sexual banter, in situations where men are used to relating to women only in this fashion. Ambiguity is created, because there is often no "right" way to act. Damned if they are flippant for not being serious, and damned if they are serious as being "stiff." Women professionals can't win. Male lawyers complain that bargaining with women is tough. But, of course, they might not be accepted whatever they do.

More solutions? Women can't rely only on chivalrous men. They need to show up in numbers. Men need to get used to working with women who demonstrate a wide range of personality characteristics, and they need to learn to be working friends with women. We conducted an interview with the first woman DA in New York (1970). Let's call her Ms. Jones. A pleasant plump woman, unmarried and street wise. She let the interviewer follow her around one day in criminal court. Ms. Jones seemed completely at ease and kibbutzed without self-consciousness with Mr. Davis, head of Bronx Legal Aid Society, a man about 50.

Mr. Davis said he wanted to be interviewed too. What's the study about? Women lawyers? "Don't use my name." Well, what about women lawyers? Being a lawyer, he said, hardened a woman emotionally; made her insensitive. Why did that matter, asked the interviewer? "Because it is her biological make-up" said Mr. Davis. She is the childbearer, the homemaker. She should be sensitive. He supposed that intellectually it was okay for women to be lawyers. But he, personally, felt ill at ease with them. He reacts to women lawyers, he said, as <u>women</u>.

It is focusing on the woman lawyer as a woman which is of particular interest. Male professionals have problems treating their women colleagues straight -- like a colleague. But curiously, only when they are equals, or, heaven forbid, superordinate. Managers have no trouble working with a woman secretary, a doctor with his nurse. Or, if the woman is a client, or a patient. Male professionals don't mind treating women, defending women clients or accepting their checks. What's so tough about equality?

But it is not only the men. I noted before that women share these beliefs, or women aid in their own exclusion. I detest blaming the victim, but women who do not move to solve the problem do aid in perpetuating it.

How Ambiguity Leads to Ghettorization

There are other consequences for women attorneys in all this. Not only do men feel reinforced in their evaluation that women don't "fit in" an organizational setting, women retreat. They contribute to their own self-exclusion. Many women lawyers tend to work for legal services agencies and feminist law firms which tend to be overwhelmingly disproportionally female because they feel good working there. Comradeship, support, and respect are freely given by the women to each other in much the same way as men give it to each other in their own segregated settings (or think, they do). One woman attorney who works for a firm devoted to working on constitutional issues said that although she would like a better sex balance in the firm which now has four women attorneys and one male attorney (if I tell you they make $12,500 perhaps this will explain why) she would be unhappy if men became a majority. Not because her firm demonstrated, as she said, "one great example of sisterhood, because each one of us is aggressive, competitive and so on: but we work <u>together</u> far more than men do. And we do not have to put up with the normal bullshit that women have to put up with -- the sexist comments, the put downs. Who needs it?"

Most women do not have a choice in finding work they like to do

and which supports them and which segregates them from oppressive male interaction.

Interaction with Other Women

But joining women's practices has its own Catch 22 component. Many women attorneys founded or joined feminist law practices not just because they didn't want to take crap from men but because they were dedicated to demystifying legal services, making them freely available to women, and provide information and understanding that women clients didn't get from professional men. Here are some of the problems:

Getting Business

Women who started feminist firms wanted to have varied practices. Most wanted to take sex-discrimination cases and handle matrimonial problems for women but they also wanted to do business law. But they found it was hard to get "normal" business cases.

Men don't come to them, few women have business to give. And, women with money, women with power, and even ordinary women who are seeking divorce actions from wealthy husbands do not seek services of women in the feminist law firms. They suspect the competence of women professionals.

Only in the area where men could not be thought of as competent or supportive, such as in the area of Title VII sex discrimination actions, were the services of women attorneys sought. Poor women also seek women attorneys.

Much of this is changing, although some feminist law firms may go under before the transition is complete.

The Problems Feminist Lawyers Have With Women Clients
(Another Problem of Structural Strain in Role Relations)

How about the women clients who do go to women lawyers? Some informants claim that women clients have many more expectations from a woman lawyer than they do with male lawyers. These clients believe that the woman lawyer will be more sympathetic and understanding of their problems than a man and will tend to tell her a lot more. They also expect the woman lawyer to spend a great deal of time with them. The women lawyers think that the clients feel it is appropriate to take more time with a woman lawyer than they would with a man. That is, they believe a man's time is worth more; that he is a real professional, in business, and that it would be incorrect to "waste" too much of his time. Furthermore, because they believe that the woman lawyer is apt to be more sympathetic, they wish to establish a personal relationship with her. This sets up expectations. For example, they feel offended, if their phone calls are not immediately answered.

The woman client will tolerate being put off or deferred by a male lawyer but not by a woman lawyer. For example, one lawyer said "I'll be on the phone ten million times in one week and if I don't return every phone call they [the clients] will fire me." One problem is that women generally are angry about the way they have been treated in the past but are still too afraid to assert themselves with men. So they do the "safe" thing and assert themselves with women. The lawyers feel this is misplaced retribution.

This kind of situation creates ambiguity on the part of the woman attorney. On the one hand she is in practice because she was oriented toward helping women and providing them with the kind of support which

they knew men did not supply; on the other hand, they have the same problems of time allocation as other professionals and cannot respond to all the pressures put on them by their clients.

These types of situations do not represent the entire dynamics which structurally induce strain on women professionals, and which come from both the general cultural ambivalence about women and their competence, and by the absence of norms which provide them and their role partners rules for behavior, and guidelines for expectations.

But keeping women uncomfortable in professional situations does have the consequences of undermining their commitment to professional careers and contributes to the self-fulfilling prophecies that they can't make it in "a man's world."

The examples and situations which I offered to you from my research on the law can be found in one form or another in other professions and in the community at large.

It is only by keeping alert to the hidden agendas and to the sabotage in both macro and micro interactions, that women can do their job of work without having to figure their way out of mazes. One way or another we are all involved in the process of setting and maintaining the rules and we ought to look to our own psyches and behavior as well as those of our husbands, lovers, friends and advisers in the interest of justice and equality.